

Now take me to them.

DELPHNUM [*holding him up*]. Oh, don't fall, baby, stand.

CALLIDAMATES. Dadadadadada-darling, my honey,

I'm yours—to lead by the hand.

DELPHNUM. Oh, baby, don't fall in the street—

We can lie by and by where the mattress is sweet.

CALLIDAMATES. Let me fall. I like falling and falling and falling...

DELPHNUM. If you fall, I fall with you—

CALLIDAMATES. It's falling that binds you—till somebody finds you.

DELPHNUM [*to the audience*]. He's tipsy.

CALLIDAMATES [*gazing at her bosom again*]. I'm tipsy, you say?

DELPHNUM. Do give me your hand, don't get hurt on the way.

CALLIDAMATES [*operatically*]. Take my hand!

DELPHNUM.

Come along.

CALLIDAMATES.

Where we going?

DELPHNUM.

Where do you think?

CALLIDAMATES. Oh, now I recall—going home for a drink.

DELPHNUM. Well, you're on the right track.

CALLIDAMATES.

Yes, it's all coming back!

[*They stagger along a bit. PHILOACHES, who has been watching all this with amusement, now turns to PHILEMATIUM*

PHILOACHES. Shall I meet them and greet them, my darling?

He's my best pal of all, and our friendship is strong.

[*Stands up to go*

I'll be back in a jiffy.

PHILEMATIUM.

A jiffy's too long.

CALLIDAMATES. Hey, anyone home?

PHILOACHES.

Me.

CALLIDAMATES. Philo! [*To DELPHNUM*] It's Philo, it's Philo!

That marvellous, wonderfulest, friendliest fellow!

PHILOACHES. Hello!

CALLIDAMATES.

Hello!

DELPHNUM.

Hello!

PHILEMATIUM.

Where do you come from?

Hello!

CALLIDAMATES.

Where roses are red—and the rose wine is mellow.

PHILEMATIUM. Sit down, dear Delphnum, let's all drink deep.

CALLIDAMATES [*suddenly collapsing*]. I'm going to sleep.

PHILOACHES [*smiling*]. It's not something new....

DELPHNUM. But what should we do?

PHILEMATIUM.

Let him get forty winks, while meanwhile the rest of the party has—drinks!

[*Music. Laughter. They revel for at least a few seconds*

TRANIO runs on-stage, in a great panic

TRANIO. Jupiter supreme with his supremest might and mighty main

Surely wants to kill me and my master Philolaches, too.

Hope is absolutely gone—we have no refuge we can trust in.

350

Safety couldn't save us if she wanted—safety's unsafe, too! Terrors and titanic tides of troubles have just touched the harbour—

And I saw them. Master's back from foreign fields—and now I'm finished!

Anybody in the audience would like to make a little money?

All you have to do today is take my place—for crucifixion. Come, speak up, you whip-resisters, iron glad-men, raise your hands.

Where are you—you men who'd storm a city wall for next to nothing?*

And get paid with ten or twenty... javelins, right in the gut.

You can have a talent if you win the race to bear my cross. Nailing down your fee as soon as arms and legs are nailed down twice.

360

[*Smiles*] After crucifixion, then present yourself—and I'll pay up.

[Then reflects] Am I not a tragic fool? I should be sprinting home with speed!

[At this moment, PHILOLACHES notices that TRANIO has appeared]

PHILOLACHES. Ah, he's back from shopping. Look—there's Tranio, back from the harbour.

[TRANIO now runs up to his master]

TRANIO. Philolaches—I

PHILOLACHES.

Hi!

TRANIO.

Both you and me—

PHILOLACHES.

Both you and me?

TRANIO.

We're finished!

PHILOLACHES. What?

TRANIO.

Your father's here!

PHILOLACHES.

What's that you say?

TRANIO.

I say we're both destroyed!

Father's here, your father's here!

PHILOLACHES.

He's where?

TRANIO.

He's here, arrived!

PHILOLACHES. What? Who says so? Who has seen him?

TRANIO.

I myself.

PHILOLACHES.

Oh, woe is me!

Gad—I'm lost—where am I now?

TRANIO. You're lying down, that's where you are.

PHILOLACHES. Did you really see him?

TRANIO.

Yes.

PHILOLACHES.

For sure?

TRANIO.

For sure.

PHILOLACHES.

For sure—I'm dead!

Dead—if what you say is true.

TRANIO. But why on earth would I tell lies? 370

PHILOLACHES. Tell me what to do—what should I do?

TRANIO [pointing to the party stuff]. Have this mess cleaned

up.

Who's the guy asleep?

PHILOLACHES.

Callidamates. [To DELPHIUM] Delphie,

wake him up.

DELPHIUM [shaking CALLIDAMATES]. Dear Callidamates, do

wake up.

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly]. I am awake. [Quickly] I want a drink.

DELPHIUM. Do wake up now—Philolaches' father's back!

CALLIDAMATES [toasting drunkenly]. Welcome, Father!

PHILOLACHES. Welcome Father, goodbye me!

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly, half hearing]. Who'd buy me? Buy me? What for?

PHILOLACHES. Please, by Pollux, do stand up—my father's here!

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly].

Your father's here?

Tell him to go off again. Why did he have to come back here?

PHILOLACHES [terribly upset]. What can I do now, when

Father comes and finds me drunk like this,

finds his house is overflowing full of girls and party guests?

What a thing—to start to dig a well when you're already

thirsty.

That's my problem—what to do. My father's here and I'm

in trouble.

TRANIO [indicating CALLIDAMATES]. Look, your friend has

fallen off asleep again. Do shake him up.

PHILOLACHES. Hey—wake up, my father's come back home.

CALLIDAMATES.

What's that? Your father?

Get my sandals and my weapons, then I'll go and kill your

father!

PHILOLACHES. You'll destroy us!

DELPHIUM.

Do be quiet.

PHILOLACHES [to slaves].

Carry this guy in at once.

CALLIDAMATES [drunkenly, to one of the slaves carrying him

inside]. Hey—are you a chamber pot? You will be in

another second.

[They carry CALLIDAMATES inside]

PHILOLACHES. Oh, we're dead!

TRANIO. Be brave. I'll meditate your misery... with wit.

PHILOLACHES. Oh, I'm finished.

TRANIO. Quiet, will you? I'll dream up some remedy.

Look—will it suffice you if I see your now-arriving father

Doesn't set foot in this house and even rushes far from it? 380

For the moment, go inside and clear the party stuff away.

PHILOLAGNES. Where will I be?

TRANIO.

her. And Cal with Del.

DELYNIUM. Wouldn't it be better if we left?

TRANIO.

Don't even budge, my dear. If you stay inside, you can drink up no less than right out

here.

PHILOLAGNES. Oh, ye gods, what will your sweet words bring?

I'm drunk with fear!

TRANIO. Look—can you keep calm and follow all my orders?

PHILOLAGNES.

Yes, I think.

TRANIO. First and foremost, girls, I want the two of you to go inside.

DELYNIUM. Both of us will be most dutiful to you.*

[*The girls sink off into the house*

TRANIO.

love make it so.

[*Playing commander in chief, to PHILOLAGNES*]

All right, pay attention now, I'll tell you what I want from you:

First and foremost, have the house completely closed and locked up tight.*

400

Be on guard inside; don't let a single person mumble—

PHILOLAGNES [*nods*].

Yes.

TRANIO. Make it look like no one really lives here.

PHILOLAGNES [*repeating*].

'No one lives here.'

TRANIO.

Right.

When the old man knocks, nobody answers. Not a living soul.

PHILOLAGNES. Yes, what else?

TRANIO.

The front-door key, that locks you in from here outside,

Get it to me, then I'll lock the house and close it up completely.

PHILOLAGNES [*getting emotional*]. Tranio, it's in your hands—my welfare and my wealth as well.

[*He goes into the house*

TRANIO [*much brando*]. If a man has talent, it's no different 407-8 if he's a slave or master.

[*TRANIO goes to the front of the stage to address the audience*

The man who has no bit of boldness in his breast,

It doesn't matter if he's high or low in life,

410

He fails as fast as anyone—if he's a failure.

And yet you have to seek out someone super-smart

To take a bungled business that is in hot water

And see that everything calms down, no damage done,

While he himself is not ashamed of anything.

Now *that's* what I intend! I'll take our sea of troubles

And soothe them down to absolute tranquillity,

No single bit of pain produced for anyone.

At this moment, a BOY SLAVE steps out of the

house, carrying a huge key

TRANIO. But why have you come out here, Sphaerico? [*Sees*

key] Ah, good!

You fully followed my instructions.

BOY [*carefully repeating a message*]. Master orders—

420

And begs you please—to chase his father off somehow.

Don't let him come inside.

TRANIO.

You tell our master this:

His dad will feel such terror just to see the house

He'll flee completely panicked, with a shrouded head.

I'll take the key. Go in and lock the doors up tight.

I'll also lock them up out here.

[*Boy exits*

We're ready for him.

The games we hold today, while this old man's alive,

Will far outmatch whatever games he'll get when dead.*

I'll leave the door and set a lookout post up here.

[*He skips to a corner of the stage, peers off*

And when the old man comes, I'll fill him full of it.*

430

[*A pause—musical interlude?*

Finally, enter old THEOPROPIDES,

dressed in his travelling clothes

THEOPROPIDES. O Neptune, what a debt of gratitude I owe

the!

For thou allowed me, half alive, to reach my home.

Indeed, if after this you learn I've gone to sea,

Or set a single foot upon a wave, proceed

To do me in the way you almost did me now.
Away with you, away, away forevermore!

I've trusted you with everything I'll ever trust.

TRANIO [*aside*]. By Pollux, Neptune, thou hast really blundered badly:

For thou allowed the perfect chance to slip right by.

THEOPROPIDES. I'm coming home from Egypt after three long years.

My people surely are most anxious to receive me.

TRANIO [*aside*]. The man your people are most anxious to receive

is someone who would bring them news that you were dead!

[THEOPROPIDES *has gone up to his house*

THEOPROPIDES. I say, what's this? The doors are all locked up in daytime?

I'll knock. [*He knocks*] Hello—is someone home? Hey—open up!

TRANIO [*revealing himself to THEOPROPIDES, melodramatically*]. What man is this who now approaches our front door?

THEOPROPIDES. It's Tranio, my slave!

TRANIO.

O Theopropides!

Dear master, greetings! Great to see you safe and sound.

Have you been well?

THEOPROPIDES.

As well as now.

TRANIO [*a bit uneasy*].

That's nice to hear.

THEOPROPIDES. And you—are you unwell?

TRANIO.

Unwell?

THEOPROPIDES.

Well, look at you—450

You stroll while not a living soul stays in the house.

No guard, no janitor, no one to open up.

I nearly broke both doors from knocking on and on.

TRANIO [*in mock shock*]. What's that—you touched the house???

THEOPROPIDES.

You have to touch to knock.

TRANIO. You touched it?

THEOPROPIDES.

Yes, I knocked it too.

TRANIO.

Oh, god!

THEOPROPIDES.

What's wrong?

TRANIO. A dirty deed.

THEOPROPIDES.

What's going on?

TRANIO.

Impossible

To say how horrible, horrendous—also bad.

THEOPROPIDES. But what?

TRANIO.

Just flee! Flee far from this most foul front door!

Flee hither, flee to me. [THEOPROPIDES approaches TRANIO]

Sir, did you really touch?

THEOPROPIDES. You tell me how to knock and still not touch

a door.

TRANIO. By Hercules, you killed—

THEOPROPIDES [*quivering*].

TRANIO.

I killed?

THEOPROPIDES.

Your near and dear ones.

Oh, what an omen—gods and goddesses

forbid!

TRANIO. I tremble... Can you purify yourself and kin?

THEOPROPIDES. But why? What is this unexpected shock you bring?

Two of THEOPROPIDES' PORTERS now come on-stage, to deliver the old man's baggage to his house. TRANIO watches them approach with trepidation

TRANIO. Oh no, hey, hey! [TO THEOPROPIDES] Please tell those two to both retreat.

THEOPROPIDES. You two—retreat!

TRANIO [*to PORTERS*].

Don't touch the house

oh no!

Go quickly—touch the ground!

THEOPROPIDES.

But tell me what's so wrong

with touching?

[TRANIO sighs a deep sigh, as if to say, 'This is it'

TRANIO. It's seven months now since we haven't gone in there. 470

It's seven months since we have all moved out.

THEOPROPIDES. But why? Speak up!

TRANIO.

First look around for other people.

Does someone try to catch our conversation?

THEOPROPIDES [*looks high and low. Sees nothing*]. All clear.

TRANIO [*stalling for time—to dream up a story*]. Uh—look

around again.

THEOPROPIDES [*looks high and low*]. There's no one. Speak up, will you?

TRANIO. The sin... was murder.

THEOPROPIDES.

Hub? I don't quite understand.

TRANIO. A sin committed long ago in ancient times.

THEOPROPIDES. In ancient times?

TRANIO.

We just found out in modern times.

THEOPROPIDES. What sort of sin? And who committed it?

Tell, tell!

TRANIO. A guest was taken unawares by a host—and slaughtered.

I think it was the man who sold the house to you.

THEOPROPIDES. S-slaughtered?

TRANIO. Yes. And robbed his own guest's gold, and then—

He buried his own guest right in this house of yours.

THEOPROPIDES [*trembling*]. But how—how did you know of it—did you suspect?

TRANIO. I'll tell you. Listen carefully: he had dined out—

Your son, that is—and after dinner he came home.

We went to bed. We all of us were sleeping tight.

By chance, I had forgotten to put the lantern out.

And suddenly he screamed. An awful scream he screamed!

THEOPROPIDES. Who screamed? My son?

TRANIO. Be quiet, will you? Listen closely.

He told me that the corpse came to him in a dream.

THEOPROPIDES. So it was in a dream?

TRANIO. It was, but listen closely.

He told me that the corpse addressed him in this manner—

THEOPROPIDES. Within a dream?

TRANIO. How could he talk to him awake?

The man was murdered over sixty years ago!

At times you can be rather silly, sir...

THEOPROPIDES [*chastened*]. I'll shut my mouth.

TRANIO. And then within the dream, he spoke:

'My name's Transocceannus from... across the sea.*

I'm housed in this house where I must house myself—

The King of Hades has refused to let me in

Because I died... too early. And I was deceived

By someone's word of honour: my host slaughtered me,

And buried me in secret—here—unfuneralled.

A sin. A sin for gold. Now, boy, move out of here!

The house is full of sin, the habitation cursed.'

[*To THEOPROPIDES*] I'd need at least a year to tell you all the horrors, sir.

[*Suddenly, noise filters out from the closed house*

TRANIO [*whispering loudly to those within*]. Sh, sh!

THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, what's happened now?

TRANIO. The door has creaked.

It's he who tapped.

THEOPROPIDES [*in terror*]. I haven't got a drop of blood left!

The dead can carry me alive right down to Hades!

TRANIO [*to himself*]. I'm lost! Those folk inside perturb my

perfect story!

I greatly fear he'll catch me in the act of lying!

THEOPROPIDES. What are you saying to yourself?

TRANIO [*stirring up panic again*]. Retreat, retreat!

And flee, by Hercules!

THEOPROPIDES. Flee where? Why don't you flee?

TRANIO. I have no fear. I've made my peace with all the

dead.

[*From inside the house, young PHILOACHES' voice*

PHILOACHES. Hey, Tranio! Take care—don't call

me by my name!

[*Now aloud, a statement to 'the ghost'*] I'm wholly

blameless. I've not tapped these sinful walls.

THEOPROPIDES. Who are you talking to?

TRANIO [*to THEOPROPIDES, pretending surprise*]. Oh, was that

you who called?

Dear gods above, I thought it was the dead man speaking,

Perhaps to ask me why you dared to touch the door.

But why do you still stand there? What of my advice?

THEOPROPIDES. What should I do?

TRANIO. Flee! Don't look back—and shroud your head!

THEOPROPIDES. And you don't flee?

TRANIO. I told you, I'm at peace with them.

THEOPROPIDES. But just a while ago you were in fear and

trembling.

TRANIO. Don't worry, please, I'll look out for myself. But you go on—go flee and fly with utmost speed. And call 'Sweet Hercules!'

THEOPROPIDES [*obeys completely, starts running*]. I call 'Sweet Hercules!'

[*He scurries off-stage*]
TRANIO. I'll call on him as well—to give you awful trouble. Immortal gods above, I bid you all draw near To see the splendid trouble I've created here!

530

[TRANIO ecstatically skips off—to the back of the 'haunted' house*]

END

From the exit nearer the forum, enter MISARGYRIDES, the moneylender, a miser-of-misers. As he begins to address the audience, TRANIO re-enters from inside the house

MISARGYRIDES. It's been a cursed year for lending cash at interest.

I've never seen a season worse than this has been. I'm in the forum all day long from dawn till dusk Unable to find customers to lend a bit.

TRANIO [*noticing MISARGYRIDES, aside*]. Oh, now we're fully finished off forevermore!

The broker's here, who lent us cash on interest To buy the girl and pay for our expensive parties. We're caught red-handed if I don't do something fast To keep this from our senior master. I'll go meet him.

540

And now enter THEOPROPIDES as well!
TRANIO *sees the old man and is struck by yet another blow*

What's this? What brings that fellow back so soon? I tremble—has he got a hint of what we've done? I'd better greet him too! Am I in awful shape! There's nothing worse than *knowing* that you've done a wrong.

And do I know! But since I've stirred things up already, I'll go on stirring. That's the order of the day.

[*He goes to THEOPROPIDES*]

What a surprise!

THEOPROPIDES. I met the chap I bought the house from. TRANIO [*taken aback*]. Uh—did you mention anything—of what I told you?

THEOPROPIDES. By Hercules, I told him everything!

TRANIO [*aside*].

I tremble—all my tricks have permanently perished! Oh no!

550

THEOPROPIDES [*to TRANIO*]. What are you numbing? Nothing, nothing. Tell me this:

TRANIO. What did you say?

THEOPROPIDES. Why, everything from start to finish.

TRANIO. Did he confess about his guest?

THEOPROPIDES.

[*A new topic*] What's your advice for now? No, he denied it.

TRANIO.

By Hercules, I'd take the thing to arbitration. [*Aside*] But get a judge who'd swallow anything I say.

You'd win as easily as foxes eat a pear.*

MISARGYRIDES. But look—there's Philolaches' slave man

Tranius.*

560

Those fellows never pay me principal or interest.

[TRANIO starts toward MISARGYRIDES, who is on one side of the stage, while THEOPROPIDES stands at the opposite end]

THEOPROPIDES [*to TRANIO*]. But where're you going?

TRANIO [*to himself*].

Nowhere. I'm in no condition.

Oh, am I cursed, born under inauspicious stars.

The man will dun me while my master's here. It's tragic.

On either side of me an awful time awaits. I'll seize the situation.

MISARGYRIDES.

He approaches. All is saved.

There's hope for money yet.

TRANIO [*aside*].

He's happy—but he's wrong.

[*Calling*] Hello, Misargyrides, hope you're feeling well.

MISARGYRIDES. Well, what about my money?

TRANIO.

Do behave yourself.

The minute I arrive, you throw your javelins.

570

MISARGYRIDES. A worthless man!

TRANIO [*ironically*]. Now there's a truthful prophecy.